

CITY COUNCIL CONFERENCE MINUTES

January 12, 2010

The City Council of the City of Norman, Cleveland County, State of Oklahoma, met in a conference at 5:30 p.m. in the Municipal Building Conference Room on the 12th day of January, 2010, and notice and agenda of the meeting were posted at the Municipal Building at 201 West Gray, and the Norman Public Library at 225 North Webster 48 hours prior to the beginning of the meeting.

PRESENT:

Councilmembers Atkins, Butler,
Cubberley, Dillingham, Ezzell, Griffith,
Kovach, Quinn, Mayor Rosenthal

ABSENT:

None

DISCUSSION REGARDING RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS COORDINATING COMMISSION TO SPONSOR THE CREATION OF A NORMAN YOUTH COUNCIL.

Mayor Rosenthal said the idea for a Norman Youth Council had originated as a student project on civic engagement and how to engage youth in the community by Caleb Gayle, who has been a member of the Tulsa City Council. She said when Mr. Gayle was concluding his research; he hosted an event on the University of Oklahoma campus for Norman high school students about civic engagement and local government. She said he made several presentations to the Children's Rights Coordinating Commission (CRCC) about engaging youth in the community and the CRCC was here this evening to discuss the creation of the Norman Youth Council.

Mr. Dale Wares, Chairman of the CRCC, said he has served on the CRCC for two years, has worked for the Department of Human Services as a social worker with children and youth for thirty years, and has a strong interest in advocacy for youth. He said the CRCC believes that a Youth Council could provide leadership opportunities for youth in the community and provide a path for young people to learn how government operates. He said the CRCC was primarily focusing on 10th, 11th, and 12th grade volunteers to allow an opportunity to solicit input to Council from a young person's point of view about current issues such as Parks and Recreation items, bicycle paths, and problems with underage drinking, in order to provide a broader viewpoint. He said it would give youth an opportunity to participate in government and feel like they have a real voice and would serve as a good example to other young people in the community to see young people participating in government. He said Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Broken Arrow have all established Youth Councils. He said the CRCC proposes that Norman have an 18 member Youth Council, two members from each ward, and two at-large members to be selected by the Children's Rights Coordinating Commission through a screening process with criteria yet to be designed. He said the CRCC discussed different avenues to solicit volunteers willing to participate such as Vice-Principals and Counselors at the high schools, the Home School Association and some of the other schools in the area, and the Youth Ministers in the area could also be contacted to nominate students. He said the CRCC proposes that the Youth Council only meet during the school year, September to May. He hoped to have everything finalized in order to nominate the first Council by the end of May, allow the members to go through training, and begin meeting in September.

Councilmember Griffith asked Mr. Wares what kind of training the Youth Council would receive. Mr. Wares said the University of Oklahoma Student Association has volunteered to conduct a one-day retreat/orientation.

Councilmember Quinn asked what ideas the CRCC had regarding the selection process. Mr. Wares said an application has been developed and the City would issue a press release and send letters to the high schools

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to solicit nominations. He said the screening process would look at the nominee's leadership qualities exhibited in the past; why they are interested; what benefits they can bring to the Council; and what they hope to get out of being a member of the Youth Council.

Mayor Rosenthal asked how Tulsa and Oklahoma City implemented their program. He said he had not contacted them but would while the screening criteria is being developed.

Councilmember Dillingham said she hoped there would be enough advance recruitment to allow teachers to identify young people with good leadership skills who might not be in the forefront. She said in some large cities, youth at-risk are selected in some of the leadership roles because they have great ideas. She said she had worked with young people on the junior high level and many of the ones not expected to engage do speak out when they are in the process of learning the difference in policy and law. She said her goal would be to identify as many of these types of students as possible.

Councilmember Quinn said there are many more young people out there than the ones in Tomorrow's Leaders, 4-H, United Way's 4-Real, and Teens Advisory Norman (TAN). He said the youth that participate in these programs should not be excluded but he advocated looking for others that are out there as well. He said sometimes there are kids that thrive in different areas such as being involved in school plays or on the debate team and although they might not run for Student Council or be picked for Tomorrow's Leaders, they should not be discounted.

Mr. Wares said his daughter graduated from the Alternative School and there are kids in that setting that could benefit from this program and others could benefit from their point of view as well.

Councilmember Quinn said he thought the Youth Council should be presented with the City Council Agenda and give their opinions about it. He said when the high school boundaries were being established, it was a high school student on the advisory board who provided the solution which was adopted. He said young people have some pretty good ideas and should be given more topics than just the standard ones that youth normally are interested in.

Councilmember Butler concurred and said there are a vast number of young people who might not have seen the leadership abilities in themselves but others see them.

Councilmember Kovach said he would like to see nominees who have potential but might not have realized it yet.

It was the consensus of Council that the CRCC move forward with the development of a Norman Youth Council.

Items submitted for the record

1. City of Norman Council Discussion dated January 12, 2010
2. City of Norman Youth Council Application

Participants in Discussion

1. Mr. Dale Wares, Chairman of the Children's Rights Coordinating Commission

The meeting adjourned at 5:50 p.m.

ATTEST:

City Clerk

Mayor